PENDLETON FIRE WEATHER OPERATIONS PLAN 2007

LOCATION:

National Weather Service Office
2001 NW 56th Dr.
Pendleton, OR 97801.

NEW FOR 2007

New zone boundaries along the Oregon-Washington border for zones 609 631 and 633.
Point matrix forecast for all RAWS locations.

HOURS:

The Pendleton Fire Weather Program is committed to a program with staff trained to respond to fire weather needs 24 hours per day. Fire Weather shifts will be scheduled during the following times:

Land Management Season Shifts: 7:00 AM - 4:00 PM Monday - Friday.
Late March - May and late September - October.

Fire Season Shifts: 7:00 AM - 4:00 PM 7 days a week
June to late September.

The National Weather Service office in Pendleton is open 24 hours a day , 7 day a week and is fully staffed. If there is a need to support a project, additional forecasters can be made available. **However, under the provisions of the National Agencies/NWS Agreement, special services provided by the Pendleton Fire Weather office will be done on a reimbursable basis**.

PHONE NUMBERS

Fire Weather Desk	(541) 276-8134
General	(541) 276-4493
Fax	(541) 276-8253

INTERNET ADDRESS and E-MAIL:

http://weather.gov/pendleton

michael.vescio@noaa.gov	Meteorologist-in-Charge
dennis.hull@noaa.gov	Warning Coordinator Meteorologist
joe.solomon@noaa.gov	Fire Weather Program Manager

STAFF

Name	Position
Mike Vescio	Meteorologist-in-Charge
Dennis Hull	Warning Coordination Meteorologist
Jon Mittelstadt	Science and Operation Officer

All Senior and Journeyman Forecasters will train and be certified to issue all forecast from the Fire Weather desk. However a **core group** of forecasters will provide the majority of forecasts during fire season.

Name	Position
Joe Solomon	Fire Weather Program Leader / Senior Forecaster / IMET
Mary Smith	Senior Forecaster
Roger Cloutier	Senior Forecaster
Vincent Papol	Senior Forecaster
Gordon Hepburn	Senior Forecaster
Jon Bonk	Journeyman Forecaster / IMET
Robert Cramp	Journeyman Forecaster
Diann Coonfield	Journeyman Forecaster
Alan Polan	Journeyman Forecaster
George Perry	Journeyman Forecaster
Diana koester	Journeyman Forecaster

COMMUNICATIONS

All forecasts including spot forecasts are input into the National Weather Service communication system, WIMS and on Pendleton's Internet home page. Forecasts can also be faxed to customers who do not have access to these systems. Internet address is: http://weather.gov/pendleton

WEATHER BRIEFINGS

Internet based weather briefings usually begin in May. During Land Management season briefings will be held Monday and Thursday. During peak fire season, normally mid June-September briefings will be daily at 0930 PDT. Phone briefings are available 24 hours per day.

AGENCIES SERVED

USFS: United States Forest Service
BLM: Bureau of Land Management
NPS: National Park Service
BIA: Bureau of Indian Affairs
USF&W: United States Fish and Wildlife
ODF: Oregon Department of Forestry
DNR: Southeast Washington Area
County and Local Fire Jurisdictions in southeast Washington, central and northeast Oregon.

FORECAST SERVICES

Land Management and Fire Weather Planning Forecasts:
Routine land management planning forecasts are issued seasonally in the early and late part of the burning season. They are available twice a day Monday through Friday at 0900 and 1530 PDT. Specific start and stop dates are coordinated with customer agencies. Routine fire weather planning forecasts are available twice daily during the heart of the fire season, usually from early June through late September. They will be issued at 0900 and 1530 PDT.

Spot forecasts/FARSITE/Special request Forecasts:
Spot forecast and **FARSITE weather data** are available year round for wildfires, prescribed fires, or any other critical land management activities conducted by ALL land management agencies. The NWS will support non-federal, non-wildfire activities such as HAZMAT and search and rescue. We are urging land managers to customize spot forecast requests for the parameters that are needed and provide critical weather thresholds that may adversely impact the burn, such as wind, relative humidity, or burn period. This will allow the forecaster to concentrate on the specific data and time line needed rather than a host of parameters that may be of little interest. Spot forecasts take precedence over normal office duties. **As implemented in 2003, the Region 6 National Weather Service offices will: require at least one observation from the fire site for prescribed spot requests. In addition valid times for spot forecasts will be 12 hours from issuance.**

Information required by the fire weather forecaster from the requesting agency is found on our internet web site: http://spot.nws.noaa.gov/cgi-bin/spot/spotmon?site=pdt NWS form D-1, items 1-12, can be used for fax requests. A spot forecast for a planned ignition the next day may allow us to provide you with more lead time before the planned prescribed burn. Feedback of how well the forecast verified is extremely valuable in order to provide more accurate subsequent forecasts. As such, the forecasters in Pendleton request all observations taken from the burn site be sent to our office. This may be accomplished through FAX or electronically. Phone consultations are available 24 hours a day.

NFDRS Trend Forecasts

A numerical zone trend forecast is prepared and disseminated to WIMS by 1540 each afternoon from June through September. In addition, two "point" forecasts are also prepared for Haystack and Fall Mountain RAWS. The trend forecasts are used to compute the expected NFDRS indices valid for the following day. The number of NFDRS indices forecast by the weather office depends only on the number of NFDRS observations input into WIMS by the fire agencies. If observations are not entered into WIMS by 1500, a forecast will not be produced for the zone(s).

Incident Meteorologist Services

Pendleton has certified Incident Meteorologists (IMETS) on staff available for wildfire, HAZMAT, or other emergency dispatches. To request an IMET, contact the appropriate fire agency dispatch office.

NON-FORECAST SERVICES

There are several duties that fall into the non-forecast services, including but not limited to teaching assignments, customer meetings, customer consultations, preparation of annual reports, preparation of annual operating plans, program management, research and in-house training of personnel.

There is a need for advanced notice (3 weeks) for teaching assignments, customer meetings and consultations. The NWS-NWSEO Negotiated Agreement provides rules for scheduling of bargaining unit employees. NWS management has limitations regarding modification of the work schedule after it has become fixed without paying overtime.

All requests for teaching assignments, customers meetings and customer consultations will be honored provided they are scheduled more than three weeks ahead of time, and they do not conflict with other Fire Weather commitments. NWS Pendleton will make every effort to fulfill requests for teaching assignments, customer meetings and consultations that are scheduled with less than three weeks lead time, or conflict with other Fire Weather commitments. For training requests, please contact Joe Solomon at NWFO Pendleton (541) 276-8134 or by e-mail joe.solomon@noaa.gov

FIRE WEATHER WATCHES AND RED FLAG WARNINGS:

Specific Red Flag criteria differ for each situation and district. The following are criteria which would warrant a Fire Weather Watch/Red Flag Warning in the Pendleton Fire Weather District:

Criteria:

Any or a combination of the following combined with very dry fuels are criteria for the issuance of a Fire Weather Watch or a Red Flag Warning depending on the lead time:

- Abundant lightning (scattered thunderstorms) in conjunction with sufficiently dry fuels (fuels remain dry or critical during and after a lightning event).

- Haines Index of 6 in combination with RH of 15% or less.

- Strong winds combined with low relative humidity which meet the criteria listed below:

  Zones (630, 631, 632, 633, 634, 635, 638, 675 & 681) for two hours at two locations (determined by the RH/WIND in Table A)

Zone 609: criteria is at least TWO stations (including Greyback) reporting RH 20% or less AND wind speed 10 mph or greater for 2 hours.

Zone 610: criteria is TWO stations for multiple hours in either scenario A or B below:

A) HeHe Butte RAWS and Haystack RAWS reporting RH of 15 percent or less AND wind speed of 10 mph or greater for 4 hours in a 9-hour block (afternoon and evening) OR

B) HeHe Butte RAWS OR Haystack RAWS reporting RH of 15 percent or less AND wind speed of 10 mph or more for 4 hours in a 9-hour block (afternoon and evening) AND one other RAWS or Station reporting the same for two hours.

Zone 611: criteria is any TWO stations (including Timothy RAWS) reporting RH of 15 percent or less AND wind speed of 10 mph or greater for at least TWO hours

Table A. National Weather Service Pendleton Wind vs RH Red Flag/Fire Weather Watch Criteria Table

Note: This is only one element in determining the necessity for a Red Flag Warning or Fire Weather Watch and shall not be the solitary justification.

Columbia Basin ZONES 631 & 675

SUSTAINED 2O FT WIND OVER WIDESPREAD AREA

(10 MINUTE AVERAGE in MPH)

		5	10	15	20	25	30
	30						W
	25					W	W
RH(%)	20				W	W	W
	15			W	W	W	W
	10			W	W	W	W

The Central and Northeast Mountains ZONES 630...632-635...638 AND ZONE 681

SUSTAINED 2O FT WIND OVER WIDESPREAD AREA

(10 MINUTE AVERAGE in MPH)

		10	15	20	25	30	35
	30						
	25					W	W
RH(%)	20			W	W	W	W
	15			W	W	W	W
	10		W	W	W	W	W

A Red Flag Warning or Fire Weather Watch may be issued if the wind and humidity fall within the warn section of Table A. Fuel dryness, both live and dead, will be determined based on the 3 steps below.

1. The forecaster is required to check with fire/land management agencies to ensure that fuels are dry enough to support large fire potential.

2. 1000 Hr fuel moisture should be less than 12% and 100 Hr fuel moisture less than 10%

3. Also refer to GACC "Dryness Level" for additional fuel moisture evaluation.

Red Flag Warning Dissemination:
Red Flag Warnings and Fire Weather Watches shall be issued using the Red Flag Statement (RFW) and will be headlined in the routine Fire Weather Forecast. All Red Flag Warnings and Fire Weather Watches will be cancelled using the Red Flag Statement (RFW) and the Fire Weather Forecast will include a headline stating such.

All Red Flag Warnings will be disseminated utilizing the National Warning System (NAWAS) network

All issuances of Red Flag events will be coordinated beforehand with the agencies included in the watch/warning area and with adjacent fire weather offices if the watch/warning is for a zone on a common district boundary. In order to rapidly disseminate Fire Weather Watches/Red Flag Warnings or other information of rapidly changing or hazardous weather conditions that do not meet Red Flag criteria, but will affect fire control or pose a safety threat a priority calling list has been established. **NWFO Pendleton will contact the dispatch offices affected by warnings who will then contact other affected land management agencies in those zones**.

USER AGENCY RESPONSIBILITIES

There are several responsibilities of the user agencies including:

- 1300 PST NFDRS observations.
- Site observations for Spot forecast requests. **A representative observation from the burn site is required for all prescribed fire spot forecast requests.**
- Quality Control of RAWS observations
- Timely maintenance of RAWS sites.

FORECAST VERIFICATION

Routine verification will be made on Red Flag Warnings and Spot Forecast turnaround times. In addition selected NFDRS trend forecasts for temperature, relative humidity, and fuel moisture will be verified. Results of the verification will be published in the Fire Weather Annual Summary. The National Weather Service will work with local fire agencies and the Pacific Northwest Coordination Group to develop a baseline for product verification.

FIRE WEATHER FORECASTER PROFICIENCY & CURRENCY STANDARDS

Pendleton forecasters working the Land Management and Fire Weather shifts will meet the proficiency standards established by the National Weather Service. The National Weather Service and the Pacific Northwest Wildfire Coordination Group will review the progress in meeting the standards. Prior to each fire season, the Annual Operating Plan will provide a list of currently qualified forecasters and those expected to be qualified at each weather Forecast office who will be providing fire weather services during the upcoming year.

FORECAST DISTRICT

The Pendleton Fire Weather District currently covers the east slopes of the Cascades mountain range from the Deschutes National Forest to the alpine reaches of the Yakama Indian Reservation, central Oregon, the northeast quadrant of Oregon (including Baker county and Harney county north of highway 20), and Southeast Washington (Benton, Franklin, Klickitat, Yakima Walla Walla, Columbia, Garfield and Asotin counties). Please see the district map for specific outlines of the Fire Weather Zones.

GEOGRAPHICAL FORECAST AREA (See Zone Map)

The Pendleton Fire Weather forecast will be sectioned by Fire Weather Zone. This will result in 12 separate zone forecasts. These zones are based on terrain, elevation, weather characteristics, and political boundaries. The zone names are as follows:

609 – East slopes of the northern Oregon and southern Washington Cascades
610 – East slopes of the central Oregon Cascades
611 – Deschutes national Forest
630 – Central mountains of Oregon

631 – Lower Columbia Basin of Oregon and Washington
632 – Southern Blue and Strawberry mountains
633 – Northern Blue mountains of Oregon and Washington
634 – Eagle Caps
635 – Wallowa County
638 – Baker Valley
675 – Eastern Washington southern Columbia Basin
681 – Yakama Alpine